



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

For Immediate Release

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Governor Proclaims November 2005 Adoption Awareness Month - 910 Foster Children Awaiting Adoption in Virginia -

Richmond (Oct. 31, 2005) - Today, Governor Mark R. Warner has proclaimed November 2005 as Adoption Awareness Month. Throughout November, the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS), local departments of social services and organizations throughout the state will sponsor events finalizing adoptions and celebrating Adoption Awareness Month.

"Currently there are 910 foster children in Virginia who are awaiting adoption placement with a loving, stable family," said VDSS Commissioner Anthony Conyers, Jr. "Events throughout the month of November are aimed at raising awareness of the need for adoptive families, celebrate finalized adoptions and help provide useful information for potential adoptive families."

There will be 11 regional "Adoption Saturday" events and many other community celebrations and conferences during the month of November, including five events throughout the Commonwealth on National Adoption Day (Nov. 19) where 49 children will have their finalized adoption documents signed by a local Circuit Court judge. Adoption Saturday celebrates the collaborative efforts between local departments of social services and the Virginia court system. These one-day events help to raise community awareness of the children in Virginia who need permanent, loving adoptive families.

"The Virginia Department of Social Services and its local agencies take great pride in the tremendous success stories stemming from finalized adoptions. Collectively, our great work enriches the lives of children and families throughout our Commonwealth," added Commissioner Conyers.

An exciting new event for this year's adoption celebrations in Virginia will be The Heart Gallery. Proven to be effective to other states, *Virginia's Heart Gallery* is a unique recruitment opportunity which has drawn national attention to the needs of children waiting for adoptive families. The event will feature portraits by professional photographers of some of Virginia's waiting children. Aimed to inspire heightened interest in adoption, *Virginia's Heart Gallery*

gives both agencies and children the chance to reach out to prospective adoptive parents. *Virginia's Heart Gallery* will be on display at the Norfolk Botanical Garden and will open during a private reception on Friday, Nov. 4. It will remain on display, and open to the public and potential adoptive families, from Nov. 5, 2005 until Jan. 9, 2006.

The following adoption celebration events are scheduled in Virginia and open to the public:

- **Norfolk** – Adoption Expo
Nov. 5, 2005
Bayview Baptist Church
707 Bayview Boulevard
9 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Featured speaker: A.J. Sanders. Activities and fun for all ages.
Contact the Hampton Road Foster/Adoptive Family Foundation at (757) 248-6444
- **Fredericksburg** – “Adoption is an Option” Conference
Nov. 5, 2005
University of Mary Washington; Jepson Executive Center
1119 Hanover Street
9 a.m. – 4 p.m.
\$10 attendance fee
Attendees register with Beth Girone at (540) 372-1032, ext. 245
- **Richmond** – Annual Statewide Conference for Adoptive Family and Professionals: “Getting on Board for Permanence”
Nov. 11 & 12, 2005
Attendance fees: \$155 (adoptive couple), \$95 (adoptive single) \$105 (professionals)
Sheraton Richmond West
6624 W. Broad Street
Pre-conference match reception on Nov. 10 from 6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.
To attend either the pre-conference match reception or conference contact Jeanette Salley or Cassandra Calender-Ray at (804) 329-3420
- **Charlottesville** - Adoption Hoedown: A Harvest of Heart and Home
Nov. 19, 2005
Greenwood Community Center
865 Greenwood Road
12:30 p.m. – 3 p.m.
Attendees register with Kendall Mosby at (434) 979-9631
- **Virginia Beach** - Adoption Services Community Awareness Forum
Nov. 19, 2005
United Methodist Family Services
815 Baker Road
Noon – 4 p.m.
Attendees register with Angela Barney at (757) 490-9791 ext. 14

- **Richmond** – Finalization of Adoptions Celebration
Nov. 19, 2005
Oliver Hill Juvenile & Domestic Court
1600 Oliver Hill Way, Suite C181
Contact Olivia Stokes at (804) 646-7527
- **Roanoke** – Adoption Day Celebration
Nov. 19, 2005
Roanoke City Court House
315 Church Avenue
10 a.m. – 1p.m.
To attend, contact Ellen Weinman at (540) 389-3825 by Nov. 11th

Virginia's adoption hotline is 1-800-DO-ADOPT. For more information on adoptions or other events planned in Virginia, please contact Sondra Draper at (804) 726-7524 or Linda Searcy at (804) 726-7584.

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Attention Reporters: Interviews may be scheduled with families who are successfully providing loving homes to adopted children based on availability of families and assurance of confidentiality.